

**Town of Milton  
Economic Development Meeting  
Milton Library, 121 Union Street  
Wednesday, March 16, 2011  
2:00 pm**

**Transcribed by Helene Rodgville  
[Minutes Are Not Verbatim]**

Mayor Newlands: I am Cliff Newlands and we have our Council here: Councilman Lester, Councilwoman Duby, Councilwoman Betts and Councilman Prettyman. We're here to meet with the Economic Development Committee of the Town of Milton and the Delaware Economic Development Office ("DEDO"). We have no set format for the meeting. The only requirements that we do have is that you state your name on the microphone, before you speak, so our transcriptionist can get who you are, so that we have everything recorded properly and just, please, talk into the microphone and if you need to speak and you don't have a microphone, just wait until the microphone is there for you. And we have no format, so I think I'm going to turn over to Bob Howard and you guys can introduce yourselves.

Bob Howard, 217 Chandler Street: Chairman of the Economic Development Committee and thank you Mayor and Council for meeting with us this afternoon. We wanted to have this opportunity to have a discussion, just a free and open discussion, between the Council and the Committee, and in particular DEDO; Dianne Laird, who is the representative of the DEDO and I'm going to let Dianne, when she introduces herself, give you her correct title. Dianne has been a big champion of Milton over the last couple of years and has done a lot to provide training for us and make opportunities available for Milton also. I think the Committee and Dianne and Rick, mutually, in the meeting we had about a month ago decided that this meeting would be a good idea so that they could, and Dianne in particular; and Dianne and Rick could share with all of us some of the things that DEDO can do to help Milton and their perceptions on things that Milton can do to help itself also, in terms of improving the economy and revitalizing the downtown area; but just improving the economy of Milton, in general, overall. So, with that, I will introduce everybody on the Economic Development Committee: Mike Clark, Don Shandler, Kristin Patterson, Bob Blaney, Denise Suthard and then from DEDO Dianne Laird and a consultant, working for Dianne, Rick Farrell. Rick is a principle at Retail Market Answers, LLC. With that, I would like to give the microphone to Dianne Laird and have her make some opening remarks.

Dianne Laird: Thanks, Bob. It's good to be here. We appreciate your taking time in the middle of the afternoon to be with us. The DEDO is about building jobs, building economies and I work with the DEDO; a program called the Main Street Program in Downtown Delaware, which is more of an umbrella program; that works not only with Main Street Programs, that do a comprehensive four-point approach; but I also work with Commercial District Affiliates. Milton is a Commercial District Affiliate; you have a business development; or Economic Development Committee; rather than four committees, you have one that follow the Main Street model; and that's about business development or economic development. We also work directly with small business

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owners to help them increase their profitability and help them be engaged in initiatives of the downtown so that they're not necessarily having to put a lot of time into the initiatives; but so that they can inform those who are in a position to create initiatives to help business. So that means business recruitment and business retention, and business expansion, as well. We would like to see very healthy businesses in downtowns, because we believe that is the basis and the foundation for a strong downtown. Nice events, a good street scape, all great reasons to come to a downtown; but if you want people to return or live in that space, they need good businesses to come back to. So we have been working, Rick Farrell and I, have been working with seven downtowns that have been named recipients of USDA Grant; which involves technical assistance and training; it's not money to the downtowns; but it's training and we provide technical assistance. The recent branding, community branding technical assistance was a service that we provided; but we've been working over several year's time in Milton and with six RCDI towns; the vacancy treatment initiative is one; we've done some design work or designed technical assistance in some towns; and at this point, we were open to any new initiatives or existing initiatives or wannabe initiatives that the town would like to pursue. Certainly working with the Economic Development Committee to engage business; to make it an ever ready town to receive new businesses; to recruit new businesses; and to help those that are existing. So we've been working with this Committee over time and we thought that today would be a good opportunity to hear a little bit from the Council to find out what kinds of initiatives would you like to see done or what kind of initiatives might be in place that you believe are building business or could be building businesses; how can we support that effort. Rick, would you like to add to that?

Rick Farrell: I have a couple of comments. Just to tag on to what Dianne has said; early on in the process with the seven towns that Dianne referred to, we came to Milton and we conducted a field assessment and created a, what we refer to as a business and building inventory. In communities that are going to try to proactively pursue new business development opportunities, it's important to understand the inventory that you have. So the infrastructure that you have in building stock; how it's zoned; what the footprint of that is; and how it's currently occupied with space users; are things that we like to look at in the totality, so we have a sense of in a particular downtown how much is goods and services; how much is retail; how much is office; and so forth. We did that, because it's a foundational tool and we've made that available to the Economic Development Committee as one of those foundational tools, so that if you're ever in a position, in the future, where you are helping match the end users of space with the space you have available, you have a document and a database for that. It's a one-stop shop. It's also done in an Excel format that allows the group to annotate as a working document; as they go, not only who's in the building and who owns the building; if they ever want to have a conversation with the owner or the business occupant; but it also has the footprint and anything else that you might want to load into that document as pertinent information. If it has dedicated parking, there's a place to capture that data. You could take digital photography of that and populate that field of the Excel spreadsheet so that you could actually; if you didn't have someone in town, but you were talking to them about your town; you could give them the visual of every storefront and who the occupants are and do it in a more virtual sense; if you didn't have them physically here. We also use it, in our work, Dianne and I, in other communities that we're in, as a tool for tracking and

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measuring the different conversations we're having with property owners and business owners. If we're looking at a new signage initiative, or we're talking with several prospects or a vacancy; and trying to assist that property owner with cuing up some ready, willing and able interesting tenant choices, we might use that document in the comment section, to track what we did last; who we talked to; and keep the record of the conversation for reporting back to the group's purposes and so forth. That document was done up front and it's one of the deliverables that just came with this USDA work. The other thing is, that puts you ahead of the track, is as I understand it, Council has heard the vision and the mission of this group; and essentially endorsed it and it's a very, I think, well-stated and open enough, that it could cover a lot of ground without being too narrowly defined. As Dianne said, it would be nice if as they start to put together the agenda of the kinds of initiatives they might work on and maybe some of the things we could help initially with; it would be nice, given the universe of things that are out there to do under the raw topic of business development; what things would be more meaningful because they might be a little bit more pressing; a little bit more on the top of your mind; because those might be something that we can cue up first. I thought it would just be a nice discussion since, as a group and as a governing body we really haven't had this dialogue. Sorry if this catches you a little off guard, but there's no right answer; it's just a top of mind discussion; what do you guys see in terms of opportunity, now that this group is all dressed up and looking for somewhere to go. How can they support that? Then what I'll be listening for is how we can plug into that; maybe with some of the things that are available to us and then what we may be able to do is take the conversation from there to what I would like to leave you with today is a sense of some Best Practices and incentives and things that other governing bodies; not only around the State, but around the Region, are doing when they're working with similar groups. Just to get those rattling around for your future thought, consideration, planning, work, etc. Does it sound good?

Dianne Laird: So we have a number of things that we could talk about, but we're really open to hear from you first; if there are thoughts that you have about Milton as a business environment; or what you would like it to be; how it's been. Do you have any thoughts?

Mayor Newlands: I would like to start off and ask; we don't really charge much in taxes to the businesses, as far as property taxes or any other kind of taxes; our fees are very low; so there's really not much of an incentive that the town can give to a business. We keep hearing from other areas, well it would be nice for Town to give incentives; well there's really not much that we can do. You can start a business here for \$100, I think it is, or \$150 for the license and your property tax for some of these stores is less than \$1,000 for the year. So there's really not much incentive we can give, as a town. So what else can we do and how can we help out and attract the businesses to town?

Dianne Laird: That's a good question because most of the States and Cities around the country can do something with tax incentives; but the incentives that we'll talk about, don't always have to do with tax credits or responses or even with money. It's not always with money and so we can talk a little bit about that. I can tell you first of all, before I hand the mic over to Rick, that some town's offer programs for facade improvements or signage grants or canopies and awnings or other kinds of matching grant programs and they don't have to be a lot. It might be a \$250 or \$500 matching grant; so that they can get a new sign or paint the front of the building or get some new molding or just repair it

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slightly to bring it back into good maintenance; and so that's something that does cost some money; but there are ways to fund that; that's not necessarily from Town Council. So that's one example.

Mayor Newlands: So these are things that a business would need \$500 for a sign and we could possibly get a grant from someplace; we could get the grant that they're not able to get.

Dianne Laird: Right. Or you could set up a loan pool or a grant pool of say \$250 matching grants; where they come up with \$250 and you come up with \$250 and maybe you only have \$1,000 in it at first; but that may affect four businesses; and that creates an environment that shows that the town is very willing to encourage improvement and if they come half way, you'll come half way. Other opportunities can be training. Through programs like Downtown Delaware, we're offering a March focus on retailers; and it's coming to Milton next Tuesday, the 22<sup>nd</sup> from 6 to 8 p.m. in the Library, right here and (actually if you want to pass these out Bob to the Council and others) that is not costing the town anything; but it's an advantage for business owners to be able to attend something like this. We have a consultant coming in from Texas and he's going to talk about merchandising; is available for one on one consultation with merchants, if we can line them up in advance; so that's not something costing the town money; but as a result of your relationship with us, it's an advantage. It's an opportunity for retention. It's another way of the town saying, we're supporting small business; this is free of charge; come, you'll even get food; because I at DEDO provide \$100 toward a food allowance and we find that when people are fed, it doubles the attendance and it doesn't cost anything more for the town, as well. So there are two examples of retention efforts or business friendly practices, that you could offer, that may cost the town some or, if you are able to get some funding from a local bank or get a couple of \$300 grants from several commercial corporate sponsors, could start a funding pool like that.

Rick Farrell: One of the things that I think is easy for Council to see is if the reality is that you don't have a pocket of money and a funding resource; in some respects, that's an element that's been made easy for all of us, because the answer to that is, there's nobody to write you a check; if you're a business looking for that, that's not something that you can offer as an incentive, even if you wanted to; because the fact is that your Council and many others, right now, are just simply not in a position to do that. DEDO gets calls all the time; what can you do for me, I want to open a business; and their answer is I can help you in lots of ways that don't look like writing a check; because there are no checks that they can write, right now.

Councilwoman Duby: Well there probably are checks, they don't have anything behind them.

Rick Farrell: There you go; that's a better way of saying it. But what do you do when you can't afford something; well maybe you don't write a check. What do you do, if as a Council, you're just not aligned with one another to say abate impact fees, or even if you aligned, it's alignment in the direction of no, we're not going to do that, because we rely on that revenue to provide the service; so it's this vicious cycle; we can't offer that incentive, because a) we're not willing to, or b) we can't because as practical matter we need that funding too. Or, what if it is an initiative that costs money that involves raising taxes and you're just not either politically or ideologically or otherwise inclined to do that as a governing body. What are the ways that you can still take an idea and move it

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forward without necessarily having those traditional, and in some cases, easier ways to do it. Once you've made the decision to tax, the funds can be there. But if you're not going there or can't go there; what do you do when you're presented with those hard calls of trying to grow in a responsible way that relates back to your goals, but you just don't have the ability to do it financially. And that's some of the things we want to talk about. One of the things I think is important to do; anywhere we're affected I think the people that are doing this work, have a pretty good idea of who they're serving and so one of the things that I would recommend to you, if you haven't had this conversation already; is ask yourself, who is the customer? Because it's not always as obvious as it sounds. It's obviously it's your constituency who voted you into office; or it's the constituency that this group wants to serve when they say their job is to assist business development in the Greater Milton area with a focus on the downtown; that gives them some direction; but what does that mean and who is the customer and is everybody really in alignment with that? Because it's important. Who is the customer in any business in the private sector; if you understand that, you're probably more successful at your business, than you are if you don't understand that. And I don't think it is any different on our side of the equation. If we know who that customer is, some of the things that we're going to do fall into place more logically for us, because we are in alignment with it. To the Mayor's point, and I hope I'm not covering too much ground here, you don't have a big tax base and it's one of the reasons, in Delaware, that TIF (Tax Incremental Financing) is a harder tool for us to work with here; and it's not like in other places where the real property taxes are so substantial, that when you abate those, it's a real meaningful incentive to someone. We're layered in with that challenge on top of things. What is it that we can do that will serve our customer? I guess one of the questions I have is if the quality of life in Milton is partially determined by the offering of goods and services in a pleasing and comfortable and safe setting; then that, in in of itself, is a customer to serve. The businesses that help achieve that vision are worth going at and worth putting a certain focus to. Maybe the first thing is, is that a goal? Here's one of the challenges and one of the blessing/curse kind of thing. The downtown doesn't have a lot of infrastructure to populate with businesses. So on the one hand, we don't have that much, physically that much room to make a statement. What that means to me is it puts even a little bit more pressure on a group trying to direct and influence the growth, to do it right; because you only have a certain amount of opportunities to make a really interesting statement. That is really important to get in alignment with. Who are you serving and what would you like it to be? If you want to assist businesses develop here, then there are things that you can do that don't cost money; that help people feel the love, so to speak; when you say that. One of them is, just not to make it like a hurdle or a gauntlet when they want to get something done. Right now, there's just simply not that many people doing business; opening new businesses; and communities that can't really accommodate the limited ones that are, are really... I mean, it's not like there's so much permit pulling go on that we're in the weeds with that activity and can't service the volume; we don't have the volume. You couldn't be at a better time to put a business friendly message out there and say, if you want to come here, and we like you, we're going to do everything we can to get you in and whatever policies you need to put in play to do that would be well worth considering. I don't want to dominate this conversation. If we could just talk a little bit about what you see for the downtown; what your goals are and how, as this group goes back and starts to

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organize it's agenda and thoughts; if they could cue up a few things first; what would you have it be? And then we will help put that in play and get them some information on that level; and then maybe we'll just follow-up the conversation with this is what is going on in the region. So you can get a lot of this rattling around in your own minds.

Councilman Lester: Are we putting the cart before the horse here; I thought the Economic Development Committee would be the group that has an advisory role to the Council and they would develop a plan and some ideas, as opposed to the Council. Because the Council is involved in other ventures, unfortunately. In your review of the downtown, because there are so few stores available and we do have some stores that are really either part-time or no-time inactively engaged; maybe you've come up with some ideas as to who our population might be; who we might appeal to into coming into downtown. One of the problems that I've seen in the past few years is that businesses come to town or businesses that were here have been very poorly run. People say I would like to open this kind of store; Milton needs a bakery; they open a bakery and they don't know how to run a bakery; so they go out of business. Fortunately, the bakery we have, the new owner is business savvy and a really smart young lady. But many businesses that have gone out of business here have been really poorly run. The people running them had no clue; so I don't know how you get to people that understand. The thing I hear most is, the rents are high. Well, my office is in a strip mall out here. I pay more per square foot and pay for every service; when I was in Maryland I used to have somebody come in for less money to clean my office every night, vacuum it and here we have to do this ourselves, so when I hear people say rent is just a factor of doing business and if rent is going to scare you off, then you're better off not going into business. There are only about 3 or 4 empty locations here and the thing that I hear mostly and I hear this from my landlord, is in the case of when we started the Farmer's Market; he wanted to have it in his shopping center and he was willing to build out bathrooms and other facilities there. We're right on Route 16 and he and some others see 16 as the key. That's a tough hurdle to jump because that's where the traffic is; that's where people go through town; that's where the two major shopping centers are right now and people will head out that way. What we have here is restaurants. I've always had a vision that maybe downtown would be more artsy; antique shops, art dealers and that sort of thing. There are towns in Maryland that are solely antique shops and they do very well. We're not going to get a ladies dress shop here; because that's not going to work; we're not going to get a shoe store; so when you look at retail, you are really beginning to narrow it down. I'm sure you've seen other towns; this is a pretty small town center. I would love to see it work; I would love to see a place where people... That's what we're pushing for with the market, is that people have a place to go. Neighbors meet neighbors and friends and have a place to gather. When you come down here at 5 or 6 o'clock and walk outside the Library, it's empty.

Dianne Laird: I'm sure Rick has a couple of comments to add. I'll start the conversation by saying you have an asset right here, the water, that many towns don't have. Some towns have a college or a political presence or a waterway and that is a wonderful natural feature; so while arts may be a great opportunity here, the recreation that the town offers is something that certainly you would want to continue to play up. You have the Horse Shoe Crab Festival, I know that's one that really accentuates that opportunity; but taking an asset and advancing it and helping small business in the downtown is certainly an opportunity. Another thought is we can't do business the way we've always done

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business. And the way business has been done is people come into the store and buy and cars and strip shopping centers changed that quite a bit; but there is a real call for people to come back to authentic historic downtowns; they offer a true and authentic experience. But we're not quite there yet. One of the ways that can help small business owners and Milford is pushing this and it is slowly picking on and that's e-commerce. If you can get retailers that can identify a niche in their product line that can be sold on the Internet; they don't have to rely fully on foot traffic and the Ladybug Shop in Milford, you may have heard of that, you may have been there; that is an excellent example of an e-commerce business. They sell probably 4/5th's of their products on line; and they would not have likely survived had they not pushed that e-commerce aspect of their business. The value of that is that they can be selling 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, whether the shop is opened or closed. And if you can get several of those e-commerce businesses opened in a strip, they can relate with shipping costs, they can have united warehouses to keep their product and package and ship them; and it's a new way of doing business. It's a new technology, it's an innovative business model and so we have to think differently then we have thought in the past. The other thing is, property owners, business owners have to be invested in the idea of having a downtown that is open. They can't be having a business that's open upon occasion or when we feel like it or I'm out to lunch. You have to come back when I happen to be here and sometimes it might be 11 to 2 or 3 to 5; because people have to know that when they come, they can buy what they want and they can get in the store. So I'm not sure if Rick can offer incentives or thoughts about how we encourage that; but the idea of creating a business friendly downtown or a business friendly environment is very appealing to a new business owner or a potential new business owner that would want to locate and if they see an environment that is encouraging business, they are going to be more likely to want to locate there. Do you have thoughts?

Rick Farrell: I'm always going to go back to this question about who are you serving; because that will help you identify what it is that you're trying to create. We already know that the Economic Development Committee is charged with, in an advisory capacity, to provide assistance with business development; to come back to the governing body with some ideas and things to go forward. It would help, I think, in the course of doing that, if everyone was on the same page about what business assistance looks like and what types of businesses are we talking about; so that we're all in the same conversation. If I used the word marketing in a sentence, that word is familiar to all of us; but my version of what I think that means, may be a little different and we can end up having an entire conversation and not necessarily be talking about the same thing. So when we say business development; those are words that we're all familiar with, but what type of business development can everybody get behind? So if we were talking, for instance, to take Dianne's point, e-commerce doesn't rely... Dan Bond, the owner of Ladybug Shop, will tell you he's the largest seller of all things ladybug, retail ladybug category, in the world; 900 square feet, Milford, Delaware. In the world. He sells locally and globally and it's real; it's a real, true success story in the idea of search engine optimization; a unique retail specialty offering that is viable in a very small community town setting and there are more like that. As Dianne said, there are several success stories building in Milford right now on that very thing.

Dianne Laird: If I can just add to that, you might be saying well ladybug's, sure, that's a

niche product; but what about apparel; or what about office products; how do they create a niche? Well the idea there is that they're creative; they're ladies apparel; maybe they have a certain line of handbags or locally made goods that are very special, very specialized, unique; that can become a niche within their retail business.

Councilman Lester: Not to interject, but most e-commerce stores, if they're going to do business all they need is a warehouse somewhere for the most part, and how do you attract people, like Ladybug; I mean, how do you find them?

Rick Farrell: That's a very good point.

Dianne Laird: I just have to say there is a certain mindset. A person that wants to create community or invest in a community, in real estate and creating a strong experience and a retail destination; so you're exactly right. They could be upstairs; they can be in a strip shopping center; they could be on the moon selling their products via the Internet; but there's a certain philosophy that would go behind someone that wants to not only sell via Internet, but they want to be part of a small town atmosphere and there are people that want to be part of that small town atmosphere.

Mayor Newlands: I think part of it is the foot traffic possibility. We just had one business move out of town; actually he moved to the end of town; Delilah's Dive moved to the warehouse, right. He didn't get much foot traffic, but his e-commerce business is booming. So he didn't need the storefront; he's in the warehouse. You can go there to visit the store, but it is mostly a warehouse. So I think foot traffic is one of our biggest problems and if you look at Federal Street, you have three empty stores; two stores that are very rarely opened; and the only two that are opened, is a liquor store and an art gallery. So I mean foot traffic down there is...

Rick Farrell: I'll say this. I was saying to some people earlier, my wife and I come here to Broadkill for a month and a half each summer and we just think there's such a charm with the area and I don't have to sell that to anybody; you know exactly what I'm referring to; but it is under serving people.

Councilwoman Duby: I just want to ask you questions to relate a couple of things that you said. You keep asking the question, who is the customer; which I think is a very key question; because it seems to me and maybe I'm totally wrong; I've been here for 8 years now; it seems to me that the Town of Milton and even people that live very close in, outside our city limits, is never going to be able to support a level of business in this town that we need in order to be a thriving business center. So that leads me to say the customer is probably, at the very least, the whole greater beach community and in order to draw that kind of customer in, there has to be some sort of destination. You mention the waterway. I don't think we do nearly enough to play on that and you can think globally about that, in terms of what we might be able to do down Front Street, once the sewer plant is gone and all of those kinds of things; but that's not immediate. I've heard people talk about a water taxi; I've heard people talk about wanting to do party boats and have people... There are a number of things that we could do to use that, in addition, to the things we do in the Park; but that's a big one, that I think we're not taking advantage of. Another one that I think is discussed a great deal is the issue of Dog Fish and how many thousands and thousands of people Dog Fish brings in every week, every month, to take their tours and so on. Those people don't come downtown. We need to figure out a way to get that to happen. Right now, frankly, when they do come downtown, there's nothing there for them. I've heard this story over and over and over from people; when

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somebody comes up to them on the street in downtown Milton; well we came and we had lunch at Irish Eyes; what else is there to see in Milton? Well, if the Historical Society happens to be open, maybe you could go there; but it's a problem. So I think until we have something for them to come to; we're not going to be able to tap into that one.

Another one is the medical offices that we have here. This is a wonderfully growing part of our town; tons of people are coming and more will come to have an X-ray or to see the ENT or those kinds of things, at the very least, should we putting brochures about things in Milton or advertising in doctor's offices. I don't even know if doctor's offices take those kinds of things. But there are just the sorts of things that we need to look at to say what gets people in off of 16; if at all? I'm one of those people and there are many in town, who drove to the beach for years and passed on 16 and saw the sign that said Milton and thought, oh interesting and went on. You hear that story from a lot of people in town. What gets them here? We have this sort of chicken and egg thing. I mean we're all very optimistic that very soon the theater will be reopening; but again that brings people only usually in the evenings or afternoons for matinees and what's opened downtown; so it seems to me that as we try to answer that question about who the customer is; it then gets us into questions about what are our assets; what are the things that we should be drawing on?

Rick Farrell: Those are all on the money points and I would say this. Don't look at it as chicken and egg; because what it's really about is... You know one of the reasons I think Dog Fish Head is as successful as it is, is he's a very good storyteller.

Councilwoman Duby: You bet.

Rick Farrell: And that's what you have to be. Yes, it is incremental and you do have to have things worth coming to that are of interest to come to; to compel people to come to a place; but, that starts incrementally, one thing at a time; but even before that it just starts with the story and that's what we're trying to get a little bit more closer to today. The story could be we serve visitors and residents; so it goes to a quality of life goal to people who have invested in their residential places here and it's just as welcoming for the people who are coming from the outside to visit and support that local offering.

Don Shandler: I got special permission from Bob to be able to say something here. I want to go back to something that Deana said, and just to preface it, I just finished teaching a graduate MBA course for the University of Maryland and one of the major criteria was in evaluating student's work, is are they relying on opinions and personal experiences or are they making research-based evidence-based decisions. Having been involved with marketing programs, I often find and this is true of opening businesses, it's a group of people sitting around saying, well gee what should we do. Should we do this or do that? And with the fiercely competitive nature of retail businesses today, I can't help but think and I think DEDO might be able help us in this area, but when you look at small town America and having lived in Columbia and being near Ellicott City; that was a very successful destination point and Alexandria, Virginia; there has to be doing a down and dirty research 10 to 20 different types of businesses that could be potential good fits for a town like Milton and I think that needs to be done, rather than gee golly gosh what will work here. And the second part of it is and this is where the Rouse Company did so well with their centers, is then there has to be a campaign to recruit them; you know go after them. When they opened up the Galleria at the Inner Harbor, they knew exactly what businesses would go on what floor and what would work. To me, I've heard these

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chit chats about gee golly gosh, but my feeling, Dianne and Rick, there has to be a starting point that has a little more research to it then what has historically been a trial by error.

Mayor Newlands: Let me update you on what we're doing. Tomorrow morning we have a meeting with Dog Fish Head Brewery, our internal guys, Historical Society. The Historical Society is going to look at putting signs out on 16 and 1 from Del DOT; these are the brown signs, the tourism signs; so we're starting to get that together; they're going to advertise the Historical Society, the theater, boating and fishing with the parks downtown. We're going to work with Dog Fish Head to get the tourists to Dog Fish Head and get them back downtown afterwards; so there are some signs that Dog Fish Head is going to pay for; some signs that we're going to get grant money for. We had small meetings earlier; this is the first combined meeting we're going to have tomorrow. We just went through web training this morning, Robin and the whole staff to enhance our website, but I think we may have the Economic Development page up; we're not sure. I know the woman was putting it up, but I'm not sure if it is fully up there yet. But we're going to cross all of the different websites within town; Historical Society, the Chamber of Commerce, and have everything interconnecting so if anybody hits any of the sites, they can get information from the other sites. We expect to put the brochures from all the different sites up on the website, as well, so they can be downloaded remotely so people don't have to come into town. Mike Clark, last night, got us with the Lion's Club; he brought in a design for a kiosk for downtown, so we're going to bring that before Council in April to see on what footprint we can put the kiosk in. The building department, about two years ago they streamlined the building codes for new stores to come into town; we're going to get that online and get all the forms online; so now that we learned this morning how to do all this stuff; we'll put plans into place and put new web pages up in order to put all this information up online for new businesses to come in. They can download the forms and not have to come into Town Hall. It will save them at least one trip. We have an event calendar for Town Hall and town business; we're going to put a combined event calendar up for community events. So we're probably going to have two calendars. I don't think we're going to fit it on one. We discussed it this morning. Two will probably work, instead of one. One for town business and one for community affairs.

Councilman Lester: Let me give you, if I may; when it was first announced in the paper that we were looking at a Farmer's Market, I received probably about half a dozen calls from people that said they want to be here. I received four contracts today with money, up front to pay for space; we've got 25 people that have said yes and most of the people said, we see Milton as a market, not Farmer's Market; but they see it as a marketplace that they would like to serve. That's a lot of people; 25 people; we have one person, a food store, that is going to put our sign and our logo on their electronic board on Highway 1. These people see this, they're not right here in Milton, but they see this as a viable location. They'll serve people here and we'll buy from them. I thought this is very exciting that people called and said we want to participate. There are a lot of markets; there's Lewes, there's Rehoboth; there's Georgetown.

Dianne Laird: That's very exciting. To me it kind of harkens back to what the Mayor said about Dog Fish Head and the idea of bringing people in then bringing them downtown and I think the opportunity there is to create something at that time for them to see.

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Councilwoman Betts: Downtown. To see it downtown, because if they come and there isn't anything downtown...

Dianne Laird: Right. So that takes a real premeditated effort and participation by those business owners to say okay, because we have Farmer's Market on Saturdays from 10 to 3; we are going to open; we are not only going to open, but we could maybe take part in the Farmer's Market; we're going to do some kind of incentive or promotion to get people into our stores and to come back on the Wednesday's, or whenever, when the bus comes for Dog Fish Head. So we are going to commit to opening Saturdays from 10 to 3 and Wednesdays from...

Mayor Newlands: Actually Dog Fish Head is all week long. It's 5 days a week, all afternoon.

Dianne Laird: Well, that's awesome. I guess what I'm saying is if you can start small and pick just a couple of impact times, throughout the week, maybe business owners would be willing to commit to those several hours. The other thought and these are discussions, these are possibilities, these are options that any one of them you may decide or the Committee may decide or you jointly to make as an initiative; but the idea of a co-tenant; if there's a store in the downtown that's only opened occasionally or several hours in the week; would they consider taking a third of their space; or half of their space; or the front part; and offering a co-tenant opportunity.

Mayor Newlands: I think that was Norman; did that... You had talked to somebody about that with the art store downtown; with one of the art stores by Cliff Divers to have the artists come in and have a number of tenants and for some reason the landlord didn't like that. Was it the landlord that didn't like it?

Councilman Lester: No, it was in our shopping center and I asked the landlord if he would let the Art Guild have some space. He said yes they could have it for free; but they had to be sure that they had some liability insurance and pay for the utilities; which were really nominal and they didn't want to do it.

Mayor Newlands: Is there educational material on that? You have artists that are not businesspeople and you have businesspeople who are not other things; so I mean everybody needs education and so I think some of it is just really lack of knowledge of what they can and cannot do.

Rick Farrell: Let me play back some things that I've heard that are already agenda items, just so we can see how some of these are falling into columns; at least from what I've heard so far. This is under the topic of things that Economic Development Committee could actually start working on tomorrow. Leveraging the assets, or supporting any effort that you're working on, to leverage the assets that have already been made in the downtown with key players; like Dog Fish Head and the things like it. I would also say that is one of the things that is the biggest opportunity for a small downtown setting to keep in mind, in all of its work, is the opportunity to leverage what you have. Sort of thinking like the sum of the parts can be greater than the whole; when you leverage the opportunities that you have. As opposed to just letting one person, as a one off initiative carry all the water. Let everybody carry a little and you go a little further. So if you're going to do a Farmer's Market initiative, one of the biggest competitive disadvantages to the downtown, is that 5 and 16 intercept that traffic with pop-up stands before they get here. So in order to overcome that competitive disadvantage, what I would do is link it with something no one else has and I think it's that train out there, as an example. So if I

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were bringing my family here to the beach and I knew I could get my corn and tomatoes and my kid could get on the train, nobody can do that on 16. And that puts you in a different competitive posture; but you have to start thinking this way. You have to start thinking about how you leverage what you're doing. So the Lion's are automatically a stakeholder, leveraged partner to say you got the train; it's like you've got chocolate, I've got peanut butter, let's make a Reese's Cup. We can't do it without each other. Dianne pointed to it; it's an anchor. The water is an anchor; it's never going anywhere. Rehoboth has that working for them. You have your version of it; but you have that, but you have to layer it on with some other things that make it compelling and interesting and it's the hand you've been dealt; not the one you would like to have been dealt; it's the one you got, so play those cards the best way you can. The second one is new recruitment opportunities with a database approach with what's underserved in the market. I would link the e-commerce opportunities to that and I would throw another one at it, just because I know what's happening in this region; there are plenty of people who are in the Fenwick, Rehoboth and Lewes markets that are in a move to go north. They're taking that brand and the equity in their brand and coming north with their specialty retail to have access to our shopping base that's year round and not seasonal. So that's a fertile recruitment ground for these limited, unique, one-of-a-kind offerings. Don't put all your eggs in one basket; just put a few things into play; get your data supporting the direction you're going in; get the e-commerce thing working for you. Did you ever learn a new word, or see a car you hadn't seen on the market, that's just come on and all of a sudden you start hearing that word and seeing that car everywhere? This stuff is the same way. As soon as you start looking at the world with these lenses, you're going to start seeing opportunities everywhere. Rouse was mentioned earlier, that's who I started with; and one of my jobs was to build food courts and my job was to actually eat the best hot dog I could find; so everywhere I went I was potentially working. I was so opened to new food or whatever it was, because I could write it off.

Dianne Laird: I could do better than hot dogs.

Rick Farrell: To the last point, they could see treatment. What you have right now are billboard opportunities; I would like to link vacancy treatment and the concept of signage. You've already started an initiative with Dog Fish Head to pull off of 16 and get those brown signs to put people on the map. I also think there's an opportunity to celebrate the fact that you've arrived at the geography called The Downtown; so I would encourage you to look at how you welcome, where people come in and how you thank them for having been here and let them know where they came and that it was you and your geography that they were in while they were here; in case they didn't know. I would take that and I would replicate that theme through all of the opportunities that you have to make an impression when you're not there. So regard your storefronts as billboard opportunities; regard the vacant storefronts as opportunities to project something other than vacancy. A message that is more positive than nothing is going on in here. So that can go and Dianne and I can help you with that; we have something that we put together called "A Vacancy Treatment Standard"...

Dianne Laird: Let me just interrupt; actually they have a pretty active center going that Bob... But the idea is, of course, to incorporate and keep it moving. You've done a nice job with it.

Bob Howard: Let me just interject one other thing. One thing I keep saying and I'm

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going to sound like a broken record to some people in the room; but I'm going to keep saying it over and over. One resource that Milton has is that is unique, is the inventory of historic architecturally unique houses and the Historical Society has a walking tour that is self-guided with I-Pods and they have more than one of them, for different parts of town. That's an attraction to the town and an activity for people to come and visit Milton to see that we need to factor in to all these plans, because it's another resource we have to draw people into downtown.

Rick Farrell: I'm going to give you a couple of ideas of some other things; and these are only for informational purposes; they're not necessarily things that we're saying you should do, but not everybody is aware. This goes back to the Mayor's point earlier about what do you do when you have a limited budget and you can't write the check? I've abstracted some things that we have been working on in other communities in one form or another. Let me go off of my notes here. If as an affiliate group, a lot of affiliate organizations, affiliate towns and then the supporting Economic Development Organizations that go with them are not required to, but are often encouraged to gain non-profit status. Are you a 501(c)(3)?

Bob Howard: No.

Rick Farrell: It's something that I would encourage you to look at, because when there is funding available from different grant and federal and foundational resources around the country, around the state, and so forth; qualifying 501(c)(3)'s are often people that are poised to make a play for those particular funds. Also, when I talk about leveraging opportunities like taking an asset like the railroad and combining it with an idea like Farmer's Market, I'm also talking about the value of leveraging the limited financial assets that you ever do come in contact with. So if you have a little bit of money, I can't tell you how many times \$1,000 with a leverage buy-in from a property owner who only wants to know that they had support. Twenty-five percent of the total cost; if it's \$1,000 fund and you're saying for four storefronts we'll pitch in a cap at \$250 or 25%; just the fact that they have the partner may be enough to move them off the center and make the investment occur in the first place. It's never ever expected to be, at least from the governing body's perspective, ever on their check. People have to have skin in the game for all their good ideas. They can't just have good ideas and then other people pay for them. So I'm a big believer in leveraging everything, when you have something to leverage; but I also think that having that status as a non-profit or qualifying 501(c)(3) will help you as you are poisoning yourself for foundational opportunities.

Councilwoman DUBY: Can I interrupt you for just a minute?

Rick Farrell: Yes.

Councilwoman DUBY: Several years ago when the Milton Community Foundation was founded, it was founded, in part, to serve that function; to support not only town government but town organizations and others that didn't have 501(c)(3) but the foundation was set up in part to be a holder for grants. So for example for a couple of years the foundation handled money, took donations, to the Horseshoe Crab Festival and then doled out the money and so on. The foundation can serve that purpose again. It is something that the foundation hasn't done a whole lot lately, but did do the street light thing; collected money for that. So first of all there is an entity in town that is there to support the community of Milton that can take in foundation funds, that can take donations and they'll therefore be tax deductible and things like that. So we do have an t

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Rick Farrell: That's great to know and you don't necessarily have to reinvent the wheel. If someone is going to open a business, is there a one-stop shop right now set up in terms of; say I went to pull a permit, or I had a question about something and I went to Town Hall, would I be able to, as the person inquiring, to have a one-stop shop experience or would I have unanswered questions?

Mayor Newlands: Not yet.

Councilwoman Betts: We're working on that.

Mayor Newlands: We're working on that.

Rick Farrell: Just as a point of offering, there's some people around the State who have done some heavy lifting on that; and just by reaching out to some of your colleagues and peers, you may be able to fast track that whole process; because there are already people out there that have gone through this and have streamlined it and I'm sure they would be very willing.

Mayor Newlands: I know in Milford you can get a permit in three days, something like that. Their process is streamlined really fast and we have somebody in Milford that we're talking to on a number of issues.

Rick Farrell: In fact, Milford recently has gone even further with this. They've pointed, and this is the direction I was going in in terms of an incentive, because time is money to a business and if you can help streamline that process, not only are you making them feel the love, when it's streamlined, and if you say your business-friendly; those practices actually show it. What Milford has actually done is designated a single point person that is a point-of-contact for any question you have; and if they don't know the answer, they'll get it.

Mayor Newlands: Well we have that; our receptionist is the permit clerk and she can answer most questions and what she can't answer, goes through Robin.

Councilwoman Betts: But that has been a problem of the time limit on different permits that we need.

Rick Farrell: You don't always control how people are trying to find this information. You don't always get the call, so to speak; and they may not even go to Town Hall, so even getting that information to stores so that when people come in, because it's very ordinary that someone who is thinking about opening a business will actually go in to speak to other business owners, just to get the lay of the land and hear the buzz about things. If you supply them with information and they're the first point-of-contact that somebody made; that's either going to sink you or swim you sometimes. Believe me, I've been to communities where we've done a lot of work on the recruitment side; got someone to come ready to sign a lease; and then this perspective merchant does their own due diligence; goes in to speak to someone who had a bad day; and they proceed to slam someone for an experience or the town and it sinks the deal.

Councilwoman Duby: We've had that happen and one of the things that I think we did not do a good job of, once we changed and set up a more streamlined system, a couple of years ago; we did not do a good job of getting it out there; getting the word out to people that there had been this change. Also, something that I hope will happen both through the web and even, I think we should still do it in hard copies and get them to people; so that the information is available quickly so that the stories; because there are a lot of stories around about all the terrible times people had; and we have changed it. It's not for everybody; you have to meet certain requirements to go through the streamlined process.

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If you're going to change the footprint of the store, or something, then you don't qualify. But the vast majority of businesses who come into town, particularly now when people aren't doing huge renovations and so on.

Rick Farrell: We hear your viewpoint, and with no disrespect, if I came to you and heard the story from you that your business-friendly and then I went into a business and heard the same thing; you know which one would matter more to me?

Councilwoman Duby: The business. You bet.

Rick Farrell: Because I would think, you know, it could be self-serving. She might just be saying that because it's the words you have to say.

Councilwoman Duby: Yeah.

Councilwoman Betts: Exactly.

Rick Farrell: But if you hear it from that source, that's meaningful.

Councilwoman Duby: And if we take the time to go to businesses and say this has changed, even if you had a bad experience, we want you to know that if you ever want to make changes and you want to do this or that, then they've got the information that says it could be different now.

Mayor Newlands: About three weeks ago we had the Broadkill Boat House come in and Robin and I sat with them for 20 minutes; and they went out of there happy as anything; and they're renovating like crazy right now; hopefully opening in two weeks.

Councilwoman Betts: I was telling the Mayor this morning we lost a business this week; just because of not good communication and not good time limits on things. So we do have a problem.

Bob Howard: To add to Rick's point, one of things that I discovered during the Economic Development, is every time we came up with a new idea, it wasn't quite new. It had been addressed a year before or two years before or three years before. As Dianne indicated, it hadn't been fully implemented; we had in our tactical plan and this is well along the idea of making the process of getting started easier. We also have in it the concept of having an ombudsman or somebody to work with that business to help mentor, coach and walk them through that; and then a few steps not in the plan, that I think are really important; should be something like, now that you're here, let's help you move forward and there are a number of ways without cost that you can help that new business be advertised and promoted through websites. You think of a realtor who sells a house and gets a postcard out just to let you know we just sold a house in your neighborhood; we have a very good relationship with the Cape Gazette; so I think this is a process that's moving along and I think the Council is aware, and Dianne and Rick, you may be aware that what we've done is and we're finalizing it this week, is we developed a matrix that is showing which one of us is responsible for accomplishing what objective, in what time frame and at Cliff's recommendation to have that available for distribution at Town Council meetings. So we're sort of taking this out of a chit chatting mode and saying this is what we did; this is what we need to do; and there's obviously been an enormous sense of momentum as a result of that.

Councilman Prettyman: Can I say something, since everybody else keeps cutting me off. Back in 2007-2008, Dianne, I went to a lot of your meetings; I was a part of the Sussex County Economic Development Committee, we did all kinds of surveys and I have boxes of them; I tried to meeting with Economic Development and I was blown away. I have that information because Sussex County really did a good job, because we had the ;

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University of Delaware there to help; we met at Del Tech and they did surveys on what works in Bridgeville; what works in Finley; what works here and they did this crazy survey and then they had contacted superintendents of schools; they contacted the CEO, Jeff Wry(?) of Beebe; a group of people and then local people that had the survey and I will have it in boxes, because we figured the wheel was already there; why reinvent the wheel? Let's see where we can go with what we have and what will work here, doesn't work over there; and go around and come up with it. I see where we are now is we keep reinventing the wheel. I'm glad to hear that you are doing some more personal things and contact, because that's the way you're going to grow is grass root. You've got to get back down to the basics. We need to find what goes on. I was born and raised here in this town, with no money; the town was a booming little town; because if you stop to think it had a dry cleaner, it had restaurants, it had a men's store, right here where we are sitting right now was a tractor store. The Library was a hardware store and we had another hardware store. A lot of stuff has happened, but we need those things with the strip malls it took away. We need to have something and we need to come up with ideals and things that are going to draw people downtown and it's not... Antique shops are doing it; but I would like to see something other than the antique shops and I would like to see something else other than restaurants. They have the antique shops, they have the restaurants, they have that; so you go for something else and maybe as I'm hearing, two partners can take one store and one half of it is one thing and the other half is something else; but it's a start and then they may grow and move into a new business. But there are things that have been done and I'm hearing you all redoing a lot of it; and I've been to a lot of your meetings down in Rehoboth, Dianne and I know what's going on, but it was coming from the wrong person and they didn't listen. So I don't know how you're going to get the people to listen.

Bob Howard: To follow up on Noble Prettyman's comment, I will personally stop by at your home, Mr. Prettyman, if you will allow me and pick up that information that you just talked about; the Sussex County survey and see how that fits in with our work. I also want to address what Councilman Lester brought up earlier; the importance of a Business Plan. I know Norman for a number of years and he has preached that and you're preaching to the choir. It's an extraordinarily important item for any business person to have and I would like to recommend that if possible, we have somebody on the Committee and/or to work with Norman Lester, who is a C.P.A., to have a person that is looking for some space in downtown Milton or out there at the 16 and 5 where you are located, in the shopping center; we call it the Old Shopping Center; I would like to have somebody review that Business Plan of XYZ business and that might even be a future client for you in your business. I think we ought to have some follow-up on these Business Plans; because a Business Plan to you is a lot different then it is to somebody that's just starting out with a new business. You're going to ask them all sorts of financial questions, as an example only; and I think that would be very helpful, if they had some of your input.

Mayor Newlands: One issue we have is with the owner of the three stores on Federal Street. He's requiring that you have six months rent in the bank, in order to start renting a store. I know of one store in particular who got turned down by him. He opened up; he's now expanding. He opened up someplace else and he's now expanding. Luckily he opened up in town. His requirement is that you've got to have six months rent in the

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bank; because he thinks you're not going to be a viable business otherwise; so he's got a number of restrictions before he'll rent to anybody; and he hasn't rented those stores in four years.

Bob Howard: He's also got a requirement that you have a Business Plan, by the way.

Mayor Newlands: Okay, that's also part of it too.

Bob Howard: But he's also lowered his rent, by half.

Mayor Newlands: Yes, I heard that.

Councilman Prettyman: I sit on Beebe Hospital's committee and we're getting ready to build right on the corner of 16 and the shopping center a lab and we're going to put in 3 or 4 doctors in that; so we are looking because we had to move from Federal Street and we had to look around and then we found the place at Ace Hardware; but we've already contracted and we're getting ready to bring in the lab, which will be moved over; plus 3 or 4 doctors will be in that building; because I've been working with Wally Hudson and we've been riding around and I felt that was an ideal place for it because the parking, the restaurant, the grocery store, everything is already there in that area; but also we need, once it's there, we need to promote our downtown. These things are things that I worked on, but we have to have a way of getting that information out to visitors and everybody; because the more you get in and the more people are building, the more you're going to have. Downtown is a mystery to me and I was wanting to know how our town was built this way; it's just hard for businesses and I hear from people that I talk to about it, the parking situation, but the bank has always been very gracious; the fire company has been very gracious; that they can park here. It's just letting people know that yes, it is going change; but you can park over here, you can do this. That's another thing; just communication and I think it's a lack of us all not communicating to the people what they can do when they get here. We know, because we're here; but they don't know and they think, I can't park there. If they had that knowledge of what is there and where they can do it, I think that's going to be a lot of help in getting businesses and people to come.

Mayor Newlands: I have a comment or a question for you on the parking for Wilmington Trust. I think they look the other way on the weekend for parking; I don't know if they gave us permission, I think they just look the other way on the weekends.

Councilman Prettyman: Well that's what I'm saying.

Mayor Newlands: Well now you're going to have M&T Bank, so I just want to let people know we may get restricted. They may not look the other way anymore. We've asked to use that parking lot during the week and they said no. And the parking lot across from the police station, where John Star owns, he wants \$35,000 a year for that little parking space; so it used to be free and now he wants \$35,000 a year; so parking is an issue.

Councilwoman Duby: Plus it's in such terrible shape it would have to be resurfaced.

Mayor Newlands: He would repave it for \$35,000.

Councilwoman Betts: Because at first he wouldn't even consider it at all; he would not consider...

Mayor Newlands: So parking is one of our issues. The parking lot that floods now, we're trying to seek funds to try to fix that. It floods a little bit, so we're trying to...

Councilwoman Betts: A little bit?

Councilwoman Duby: Mrs. Betts might dispute that with you.

Councilwoman Betts: I will dispute that, big time.

Dianne Laird: I haven't been here on a Saturday, but I can tell you I have not ever had a

problem finding parking in Milton; so in my opinion, you've got pressing issues; in my opinion, parking is not one of them and if it becomes one, I will be shouting Hallelujah! Mayor Newlands: Parking was an issue for the store owners on Federal Street, because there's very, very limited parking there and that parking lot on the corner, when it was opened, their employees used to park there or customers would park there; and it was great to have because it was very close. So now that that parking lot is closed, that's an issue for those spots.

Dianne Laird: Yes, I would agree with that and employee's parking in their customer's parking lots, just is beyond me. I'm going to make a couple of comments. I know Rick is chomping at the bit to add a few more. You mentioned the survey, Noble; I think that's great and Bob being willing to follow up with that is terrific; because one of the things that I was going to ask is have you documented through a survey or other means; what people think about opening a business here. What has been their experience? Have some come to open a business and been frustrated? Getting this information documented and then looking at the negatives and dealing with them; looking at the positives and promoting them would be one way to get communication. One of the things that we talk about is that there is good work done in lots of downtowns; but the story never gets told; so publicizing the good news; publicizing the assets; publicizing a business owner that just opened up and now has a terrific thriving business; and I think it was Bob that also mentioned about the Business Plan, that is another incentive, or at least an opportunity to show a business-friendly environment; if you are helping a business come in to review their Business Plan, confidentially, prior to them opening and perhaps you have Norman or others locally, that could help with that; the State certainly works with a bunch of partners and our office reviews Business Plans, as well, at no cost. So there's a real opportunity there and I think that would show that the town is supportive of those new businesses. The other thing I wanted to mention is I just feel I need to say it; I see downtown's throughout the State on a regular basis and this committee has been one of the most responsive committees to my inquiries over the past three years; as I've been working with them. So I just want to say that they are active, their engaged, their responsive and there's good communication here and I think what they've done with the matrix, and I haven't seen the matrix; but they're active and poised and ready to move forward and are seeking your thoughts. What needs to be are several initiatives that are going to be placed in communication together; decided upon together; and move forward and one of those that comes to mind is what if you were to say, we want Milton to be the most business-friendly town in the State? If that were the initiative, what are all the things that we could do to move that initiative forward?

Rick Farrell: A couple of quick things. The comment that the councilman mentioned earlier about one of the barriers to entry, is the perception that rents are high. I agree and understood what the councilman was saying. We find in our work, that rents are a function of sales and if the sales are commensurate, then the rents, I don't know if they're happily paid; but they pay and it works. As you are considering signage for the corridors that are leading in, in your work with Dog Fish Head and as you think of the storefronts as billboard opportunities and the vacancy treatment standards underway; the other thing you might do is have an openness to listen to any of these new merchants, or new businesses that come in, that also want to use their storefront as a means of communicating what services or goods they provide to vehicular passers-by. Because

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sometimes flush mounted to the facade is not as effective as a means of letting people know that those goods and services are provided for in a downtown; so sometimes projected signage is more strategic and helps them make the sales that are required to carry the rents. There's never a single answer. There are lots of things that work in concert with one another, that improve a business that makes the investment. There is a case to be made for some people, who, if you just let them, do anything they wanted; you wouldn't like that either from a signage standpoint. There is a need for a guideline and rules, but don't, in your zeal and your need to control that, don't let a business-need that is attached to their ability to do the sales that will make them successful, not go listen to hear the case and if there is a way to make that exception, work with it; because they do need every tool they get; it's pretty competitive out there.

Councilwoman Duby: I think is something that we struggle with in a town where we're talking about the historic character of the town. Don mentioned Alexandria, VA. I lived in Old Town Alexandria for a long time and they have very stringent rules about signage and buildings and architecture and so on, which adds to the charm of the town and finding that balance between giving the businesses what they need and want to advertise and keeping the historic character of the town is very difficult, I think, in some places.

Rick Farrell: It's a good point, but I will say this; in that community the density of population is significantly different. You can make mistakes in a community that has the luxury of density; because if some people miss it, it is still getting supported.

Councilwoman Duby: You're going to get business. Yes.

Rick Farrell: But here, we really need everything we get. You need to give them every tool in that box that makes sense. The good news is that there are plenty of Historic Districts who have cracked this nut. So there's some good putts to go to school on out there, that will not compromise your esthetic and historic interest, but they'll also complement the commercial interest too. And just look for those places where you can actually have a meeting of the minds.

Mayor Newlands: Do you have examples of those, because our Planning & Zoning is actually going through a sign ordinance, right now. They're trying to renovate the sign ordinance, so it is a great time to do this.

Dianne Laird: Yes, and to your point...

Councilman Lester: Well, can I just make a point along that line? Several years ago, the town, at great expense, brought in a gentleman from the Urban Institute. He put on a phenomenal seminar and actually, Mr. Mayor, I have the handbook. I still have that book. In his handout, it represents several towns, some in Delaware and a lot in Maryland, where they had worked the sign for a Pizza Hut, that you wouldn't really know it was a Pizza Hut. It was definitely a Pizza Hut. And how they blended McDonald's into towns and they worked with that. It really could be done; it could be done nicely. We have some signage in town, there's a store at the end of Union Street, the beginning of Federal Street; it's a huge blaring sign. I would love to see that sign come down and something much more, not necessarily antique, but a something a little more appealing.

Dianne Laird: Something more pleasing to the aesthetics that are already here and the ones that are authentic. If you're concerned about the balance between requirements and nothing; there are opportunities for even that example. If you were to offer a signage grant, that they must adhere to certain guidelines to get the money; that incentivizes them to do it the way you want to see it done.

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Councilwoman Duby: I brought to Council several years; it went nowhere because apparently nobody beyond me was interested in it and I didn't push it; but there was an ordinance that was passed in Chesapeake City, Maryland, that addressed this very issue; particularly as it relates to big chains, like Pizza Hut and McDonald's and the truth is; and I'm sure this was part of the discussion that you're talking about; the truth is that all of those organizations have dealt with this; the big national chains have dealt with this and they have a lot of different designs. When they come into a community, they won't offer one of those designs; but if you have ordinances that require it, they have those already made up. It's not like they have to do it differently.

Rick Farrell: And they also, according to how compelling your real estate is, so there is a difference between a community like Chesapeake City that wants something and East Hampton on Long Island. They're going to have a compelling need to have representation in one place over the other and they're a lot more willing to bend when they think it's in their financial interest; so sometimes you will run into the difficult question of do you concede what you like, in order to have them; but they're going through the same exercise. I'm just, at this juncture, just trying to make you aware that it really is tough out there. You do have a pass-thru element of vehicular traffic that is using this road as a means to an end. There are opportunities. Think of yourself as a consumer. When you are aware of something, what percentages of your own consumption is on the basis of an impulse buy? Part of that impulse buy is motivated by just the awareness that the goods and services are there. So if we have somebody that sells Hallmark Cards and it's my wife's anniversary and I haven't got that one checked off the list, and I see some sign as I'm looking on that 22° angle bias, that we look at when we're in a vehicle; I'm much more likely to pick it up. Also, remember, after 5:00, when people are gone, that's working for you when you're not there. So when we're an active town through the evening hours, that illuminated sign is telling people these goods and services are available in this downtown. Real quickly, here are a few others. You don't provide utility services?

Mayor Newlands: No, no we don't.

Rick Farrell: I'll leave those off the board.

Mayor Newlands: We do provide water, that's it.

Rick Farrell: Water, okay. I was really on the electric side.

Mayor Newlands: Unfortunately, no.

Rick Farrell: Tax abatements. To suspend the reassessment period for someone who wants to make an improvement to their real estate. It's not an abatement of the tax, it's just an abatement of the reassessment.

Mayor Newlands: We do reassessments every ten years. We don't do it on sales.

Rick Farrell: Got it. Are you familiar with vacancy ordinances?

Mayor Newlands: A little bit.

Rick Farrell: In some communities, vacancy is an issue; and vacancy is an issue in some communities when there is no apparent impetus or desire on the part of the property owner to do anything with the vacancy. In such cases, some communities have adopted a vacancy ordinance that basically says that if you're just the victim of a bad economy, you don't want to hurt that person. But if it's a pattern and something that they need a little nudge to move off of center with their sitting on the real estate and not improving it; sometimes it's so extreme it's tantamount to demolition by neglect. Some communities

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have said 18 months; we assess a vacancy fee for that and so there is a financial consequence for land banking those fees or letting it go. Then, it steps up to 24 months, 36 months and so on.

Councilwoman Duby: Our charter allows us to do that; we've never developed an ordinance to do it.

Councilwoman Betts: But the charter does.

Rick Farrell: Now some communities, like Smyrna, are actually taking those assessments, because they had some issues to address on their Route 13 corridor for them; some brownfields and some sites that they just thought were not putting their best foot forward and because they were never intending as a governing body, for this to be a new tax or some windfall to government; they've made the sweep of those funds available for their business development committee to start a facade improvement fund. So the very thing they are trying to address, esthetically, is being funded by anybody who is the violator. Then they're saying, take this fund and maybe match 25¢ on the dollar and cap it at whatever is in the fund. But you're doing something that is cyclical, makes sense, and is worth looking into. This may be something down the road, some places have formed business improvement districts, so that there is actually a funding source available for the downtown; you're small and I don't know that that is a viable tool, but it is something being used out there. There's a gap financing tool being used in Wilmington right now, for some of the things that are happening in their downtown. There was a strategic fund that was reallocated as a budgeted line item when the city actually had money and that became a tool for... Here's the problem that they were experiencing. A lot of property was so old and grandfathered, that nobody was making any physical improvements to the property, because the cost associated with coming up to code, was prohibitive, if that cost had to be supported by the new rents they would get on the improvement. So the rents that they would get, couldn't afford, so to speak, the redevelopment. So if it cost X to redevelop and you're only going to get Y in revenue, and there's a gap, they would use this strategic fund on the gap. They were specifically looking at, and they call it the upstairs program, and they were specifically looking at trying to get the entire asset, not just the first floor dealt with; they wanted to see the residential two-floor or three-floor or four-floors converted to market rate housing for a downtown occupant. So they addressed this by saying, if you want to address the whole asset, and it doesn't pencil out when you add up all the rents of the new apartments and the commercial space on the ground floor; maybe there's a mechanism to help. If you've heard in the paper that the Queen Theater is opening and World Cafe Live; the funding for that was only raised to \$25,000,000 or \$28,000,000 total cost. The \$3,000,000 gap between actually having that project occur or not occur, was supplied by this Upstairs Program, as an example. It opens on April 1<sup>st</sup> and it is a catalytic change for that downtown. They've got a tough story to overturn about crime and safety and so forth, and a history to overcome; and this is a tool that they've used to work with that. These tools work on lots of scales. They have big numbers, but they don't have to be big numbers. They have to be opportunities to leverage. You spark, they fire. Low interest, no interest loans. Some towns, some communities that we work with have capped their exposure, but for certain deals that they were really, really looking to achieve and were catalytic, have said if this lender requires security for that deal, that they don't have, we'll give the town's full faith and credit for a portion of that loan and some let it burn off. So maybe it's we'll get you

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through the first three years; so lender if I say that I back that loan 25% with the full faith and credit of the town; and by year three, once they're established, I no longer want to be on that hook. So it burns off, so to speak. It's just a flexible way to maybe achieve something, when you are unified with respect to what that use might be. If it's that compelling and you want it, and that's a reason that it won't happen, that's a tool

Mayor Newlands: So they're co-signing for a loan?

Rick Farrell: Yes. RFP and RFQ type roles. If you control any property right now and you want to lead by example and you don't know what to do; the Economic Development Committee could come up with an RFQ, a Request for Qualifications; float something out there to interested developers that might have the means to come to the table and come to you, with the absence of what to do, with ideas that make sense to you. So rather than you being the people that have to come up with the idea; put the onus on someone else to come up with something creative; say what they would do and then determine if you want to flip the property to them. Do you own any property?

Mayor Newlands: Not yet.

Rick Farrell: If you do, and something tells you you might, but if you do, that may be a tool that when you do it; you could either flip it on some terms that are economically favorable; you can give it to them, if you really love what they're doing and so forth. But it's a tool that puts you in a position that you would want to be put in by condoning and assenting to their vision and mission. As the councilman said, this is your advisory group to bring ideas to you that make sense, as a governing body. If you like what you're hearing and they have some plans on how to back it, you'll back it. It's the same corollary view, but you're doing it with a private developer. You float it out there and see what they come up with. If you like it, make yourself flexible. This one is a little trickier, but are you familiar with special assessment districts?

Mayor Newlands: Very little.

Rick Farrell: If this goes to the earlier point, when we were talking earlier, you don't want to raise taxes to fund an infrastructure improvement; maybe you have some areas that need some kind of physical improvement; those could be designated as a special assessment district and municipalities have the ability to issue non-recourse bonds; that fund that infrastructure improvement. I won't get into the details of that, but just suffice it to say; and they're paid off by the business and the developer in that assessed district. If there's a default on the bond, the words no recourse, mean that the town isn't on the hook. You're not a surety of that issue. Now the bond markets that fund those kinds of objectives right now, given recent turns of events with our national economy, are not in great shape, but from what I understand, in 18-24 months that won't be the case. So that's like a long range planning tool.

Mayor Newlands: So this is to assess the businesses in a certain area to fix up the infrastructure in that area?

Rick Farrell: Or, maybe it's even areas that have no businesses. This could apply. This is a tool that could apply outside of the downtown, as an example. If you have an area of land that you haven't brought utilities to, as an example, and you don't want to raise taxes to fund improvements that may or may not ever get inhabited because you don't have a deal. What do you do? Well you could call it a sussed(?) district; have a non-recourse bond issue and then proceed that way. I would also recommend that you consider funding this group and don't react too heavily to that. When I say that, I mean give them

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one thing that they can be very influential with; give them some money so that; and we didn't talk about this; but I hope I'm not... If they want to do a mixer or have a broker's open, that invites, regional real estate broker's into the downtown and say see that space. Let's walk it together. This goes to the grassroots comment of the councilman earlier. Let's walk in and actually hold the meeting there; hold the mixer there; give them some chits and stuff to eat; you've got to buy that stuff. So those are the kinds of funding I'm talking about, where you could on a planned basis have people come to the downtown for very specific things. I'm a big fan of things working for you when you're not there. So if you've planted the bee in someones bonnet that there are three opportunities here and say, we've done some assessment of what we think we'd like in this area; what do you guys think? Would that float? This property owner wants \$12 a sq. ft. Is he going to get that in this market? You start building those cases so that information can help get things that aren't necessarily consensus based at the moment, more consensus based as you get access to it. So think about some of the small funding opportunities for using this group as you advisory and have them out there bird dogging some of these opportunities with select invites and those can be very beneficial.

Mayor Newlands: I like that idea, in particular, Bob. Once we get the brochures ready and get the website up and get Robin's "cheat sheets" available, I would like to do that.

Look at bringing the broker's in downtown and give them all the information we have.

Councilwoman Betts: It would be a good time to bring them would be when we have an activity going on in the town to see the people come into town, like Bargains on the Broadkill and the canoe race.

Mayor Newlands: Yes, we could do that too.

Rick Farrell: To underscore something that Dianne mentioned earlier is the extended hours of operation. At the end of the day, when you go back to a business and say would you stay open longer. If their operating history is that it's going to cost them X to stay open and they're going to earn Y and they already know that, they're not going to play. But you could take pilot program initiatives for times when you know you're going to have people coming downtown and you want to show them; so if you are doing an annual event and you really want everybody here, you have boots on the ground force now, to go out and actually state that case and say we're all open until 7:00, please! So that when they come down they get to see us in full force, such that it is. Those kinds of baby steps are the kinds of things, later, that you can build on. But you don't get it by just going in and saying, I think it's a good idea that you're open 2 hours more a day. If you're the person carrying the cost of that, you're not going to respect that. But you will respect someone saying that we're asking everybody and we don't think that we'll get the results that we could get, if not everyone is in; so let's go in and then we'll share with you the results later and see if anybody has some incremental gains then.

Mayor Newlands: Now, who goes to the businesses? The Economic Development Committee goes to the businesses? What kind of persuasion do they carry to do that?

Councilman Prettyman: I think that's a two-role thing. I can see the Economic Development Committee and also I can see members of the community that are living here, promoting their community and their surroundings and I think that would sell someone, because you have that Economic Development person there. I think it's a two-role thing and it's a package deal; we shouldn't leave anyone out, because we're trying to sell and the more knowledge that we can give to that person, the more they might say

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okay; there's something that the Economic Development person there might have one opinion; and the business owner might have a different opinion and if you put it together and the business owner might be agreeable.

Don Shandler: To build on your list of suggestions, one of our goals is to function on a quarter system; where January, February and March we have certain specific objectives in mind. Rolling out this responsibility matrix and list of activities we're currently involved in, will have been accomplished. But one of the next steps that Bob Blaney and I are responsible for; our technical plan was just let's roll up our sleeves and get to work. The broader issue is a strategic plan and many of the things that you're suggesting are wonderful items to start to block into these longer range plans. Whatever is not necessarily discussed today, I can assure you that our committee and Bob and I working together will incorporate them in a broader strategic plan. I think this is exactly the fuel we needed to move forward.

Rick Farrell: Dianne and I have done a lot of these kinds of community presentations and we actually have talked together at the National Main Street Conference, on a number of occasions and one of the things that we have come up with in our explanation of this, is this analogy to the cover of a box and a puzzle. If someone gave you a puzzle with lots of pieces and just said have at it, and you didn't have access to the cover of the box and what you were building, you might get it done, but it's a different exercise, then if you have a context. To your point, when you have that strategic plan and this goes back and this would be a good way to wind it up; it goes back to who is the customer and who are we trying to serve, because it's the context that we're looking for. If everyone here is really on the same page with what you're trying to do out there, things just fall into place differently. If anyone is out of the room and asked a question, there's a greater likelihood that you'll respond the same way and the same access to information from whatever source, is present. That's really when I think ideas have more power. So I would really be encouraging to say; and you can sell it better; if you are selling from a context, you can sell more effectively, then when somebody is approaching it like a one off or an individual opportunity. To say our plan is to have unique things in the downtown, that you cannot find on our corridor. We are the anti-shopping center; the shopping center is it's asset; we are ours. Their world is their world and they're going to be better at it than we are, because that's not what we're even trying to do. What we're trying to do is everything they can't do. They don't have water in their backyard. They don't have the rooftops in this community feel an authentic infrastructure. This was made by the investment of people that came before us and we're just trying to embellish on that and put some luster back to it; and it could be a very different exercise if you're speaking it that way.

Councilman Prettyman: And you too have to let everybody know that we're a walking community. There is so much; they can walk downtown to different things. We have things where you can leave your car at home. We have here a lot of people that walk and so that's going to open up because when they come down other than going to the restaurants, they're going to look into the shops and they're going to say, oh I didn't know. That's going to bring more and we have to get that out to everybody.

Rick Farrell: I think the beacon of hope for that story is the baker that you were giving praise to earlier. I agree with you. That's a solid business and it demonstrates that when you pull from more than just the immediate rooftops and they and they do; and they do it



daily; it can succeed. You only have a few more like that to go. Very doable.

Councilman Lester: I'm not sure if everybody is aware, but there is a group of businesses; a fairly large group that had set up a cooperate advertising program; I believe, they've stayed open late on a couple of nights when there have been events in town; and they seem to be working. I know they're planning an advertising campaign for the spring and it's going to be in the paper over several weeks. There's a group of people that came up with that idea themselves.

Dianne Laird: Are they downtown?

Councilwoman Betts: Yes.

Dianne Laird: They're downtown business owners. That's terrific.

Bob Howard: They are making plenty of brochures, they have a draft of it; they're going to print a brochure, distribute it around the area to attract people to Milton and it is using the branding material from the workshop.

Dianne Laird: I know, not everybody's on the same page about that; I am aware of that, but hopefully, you can be pretty near on the same page soon; because that kind of identity is very important to put out. That can be your newsletter; it can be your website; it can be your town signage; and that's really the point of it. It is to say we are a town; we are contemporary and yet we're authentic historic; and we are moving; we are business-friendly and we want you to be here. Hopefully, there can be consensus soon about the actual look of the branding; because the package is ready to roll out, in terms of getting it out there and publicizing Milton.

Mayor Newlands: Actually we found out last night that the Library is giving out packages and I think CD's. They're copying some of the branding material and we're going to put them up on the website when we get the new page up.

Dianne Laird: Terrific.

Mayor Newlands: And we'll put the logos up so that they can be downloaded.

Dianne Laird: And by the way, your resolution is being used as the model, as you know; because I asked your permission; but just so everybody knows, the Resolution that the town adopted or created to implement it as the new letterhead; where it runs out or as you do updates on the website; that was awesome and I am using that. Not only as an example, but as a requirement to towns that are receiving the service now. I'm thrilled about that.

Rick Farrell: Is there anything I can do in the interim time relating to the ordinance that would be of help now; because that seems to be something that you're working on right now? The signage ordinance.

Mayor Newlands: I don't know. When has Planning & Zoning met on the signage ordinance? Have they started meeting yet?

Robin Davis: They only met one time.

Mayor Newlands: They have met once on it already. Okay. I guess to review it and to see what's in there. Right now it's a little bit confusing, the ordinance; that's why they're reviewing it; because we have some duplication and some confusing sections to it. So they're reviewing it for that. But if you could take a look at it and just see what you can inject into it for these new types of signs that you think we need to have, or should have, that would be very helpful.

Rick Farrell: Great.

Mayor Newlands: Sure.

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Dianne Laird: The Committee has been very familiar with the USDA grant that runs out momentarily. It was supposed to be December; I got an extension through April and then I'm going to hope for one through June. But I want to assure the town and the Committee that Downtown Delaware is not going anywhere and with such an engaged group I intend to continue to offer support through Rick, through our office, training is always open and available; but we're so interested in supporting those that are coming to the table developing these kinds of initiatives, that we're not going anywhere. I want to assure you of that. The L&I (Licensing and Inspections), or the process to open a business; if there's anything that we can do by getting examples or anything, we are very open to that. We want to provide that service, because our network is nationwide and so we can find a town in somewhere somewhere that may be you don't generally have access to; and provide you with examples of Best Practices. So we're open to that, more than open; willing and ready.

Mayor Newlands: Great, thank you.

Councilwoman DUBY: Thank you so much for your support. This has been wonderful over these years to have you to hang in there with us through the ups and downs and it's just been really, really helpful to have you.

Rick Farrell: I can tell she likes this group, because I've spent a lot of time with Dianne and one of the things you get to know about her, when you spend time with her is, she doesn't eat when she's hungry. Not everyone enjoys that experience. To get here, she didn't get lunch. This is a meatball sandwich and she's been so pleasant; the only explanation I have for that is that she likes you guys.

Councilwoman Betts: Today she's going to be able to eat it when she leaves.

Councilwoman DUBY: That's high praise, I guess. Thank you.

Rick Farrell: Very high praise, indeed. Thank you.

Mayor Newlands: This was terrific.

Dianne Laird: Any next steps that you want to suggest or recommend?

Bob Blaney: I just would like to make a comment. I just think this has been very, very positive and I think the communication between the Committee and the Council is very important and I think this is just a start. I think we ought to really keep it up, because we need both of each other, for this to succeed. Thank you very much.

Councilwoman DUBY: Absolutely.

Mayor Newlands: I think, Bob, we should start regular meetings like every two weeks, maybe. We have the web page up and we need to get a design for that page, so we need to sit down and talk about it and do all that.

Bob Howard: I'll take you up on your offer, just two positive notes. One, while we're talking about what we can become, my wife and I for the first time were to Middletown, and I said WOW, look at all of these things going on here and the sales gentleman said, it wasn't quite like this not too long ago. Similarly, driving through Milford, I saw these great banners and son of a gun, I get it; what a difference that makes. So there are towns in southern Delaware doing the things we're talking about and I think most of what we've talked about, is very accessible, with the plan and our efforts. So, I know speaking for Bob and our team, we're just delighted to have had this chance to work with you.

Bob Blaney: I would just like to say on behalf of the Committee, thank you to the Mayor and Council for taking the time to meet with us; thanks to Dianne and Rick for taking the time to come down and present this stuff or talk to us and there are a lot of good ideas

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that I've taken notes on and hopefully I can get some notes from them by email and we'll try to incorporate all of this into our plans.

Mayor Newlands: Everybody here has been putting a lot of time and we really appreciate it and it will show when town gets transformed. It will show. Thank you.

Adjourned at 3:58 pm.